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tion of that redemption, it can always be argued, as Nägele and de Man have done, that Benjamin dramatizes the empty negativity of redemption. I believe an either/or logic is antithetical to a literary figure who takes such obvious relish in proving the necessary cohabitation of *doxa* and *eidos* in one and the same historical manifestation.

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SCRIPTURE, CANON, AND COMMENTARY: A COMPARISON OF CONFUCIAN AND WESTERN EXEGESIS. By John B. Henderson. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991. 247, xii p.

Despite the occurrence of some recent works of an exegetical nature such as Joel Weinsheimer's *Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method* (New Haven, 1985) and William Dowling's *Jameson, Althusser, Marx: An Introduction to The Political.Unconscious* (Ithaca, 1984), the form of commentary that limits its content to the exposition of a master text, as John B. Henderson observes in this book, is no longer the predominant form of modern scholarship. But insofar as modern scholarly works all build on, respond to, and interpret earlier works and texts, they are all commentaries in one way or another, and the study of commentarial procedures, especially the exegetical strategies in the interpretation of canonical texts, becomes in itself a critical issue of tremendous interest and importance. What distinguishes Henderson's book from other studies of canon and interpretation is its broadly cross-cultural, comparative perspective, clearly indicated by its subtitle. In today's academic world, where the pursuit of knowledge is so heavily departmentalized and increasingly branches out into a maze of specialization, it is rare to find a book that takes such a broad view and encompasses both East and West in its discussion of canonization and commentarial assumptions and strategies. This effort alone in Henderson's work to understand exegetical traditions of the East and the West beyond the gap of cultural differences is worthy enough of our respect and praise. Moreover, when contemporary theory puts so much emphasis on cultural, ethnic, gender, or some other difference, it is encouraging to see a metacommentary on various commentarial traditions "with a view toward identifying and explaining what is universal in them" (p. 4). Such a broad perspective may of course be questioned, and its interest in "the universal," as Henderson himself realizes, may well be suspected of levelling everything to a false uniformity and therefore "seem unjustifiable" (p. 4). By drawing on an impressive number of sources and secondary literature, including the Chinese Confucian, the Vedantic, the Qur'ānic, the rabbinic, the Christian biblical, and the classical Homeric commentaries, however, the author has succeeded in demonstrating what is evidently shared by the different traditions. The ground for such cross-cultural comparison, or the reason why these otherwise different traditions have so much in common in their hermeneutic endeavor, as Henderson argues, has to do with the nature of canon and canonization. The similarities arise as "systematic consequences of attempts to solve problems raised by the interpretation of canonical texts" (p. 6). Because commentators in different traditions all maintain that their scriptures or canons are comprehensive and all-encompassing, coherent and well-ordered, self-consistent and not contradictory, having moral and profound meanings, containing

nothing superfluous or insignificant, etc., similar strategies are employed to substantiate these claims or assumptions. The relation between commentarial assumptions and strategies as Henderson describes it is certainly true of the Confucian tradition, with which he is fairly familiar; but the aim of his book is to trace the same relationship not just within one tradition that has a long history of different eras and schools, but among different traditions beyond their cultural and historical heterogeneity. Such an approach certainly has its strength, as evidenced, for example, when the author points out that the self-consciousness of canonical texts, "the book's focus on itself," is not unique to the Hebrew Bible, as Richard Friedman seems to suggest, but characteristic of canonical texts in other traditions as well, such as "the *Classic of Change,* the Veda, the *Rāmāyana,* the *Mahābhārata,* the Qur'ān, and even *Don Quixote*" (pp. 108, 109). It is also owing to the cross-cultural perspective that the author is able to show that not only are most commentaries canonized in the course of history, but commentators in different traditions also tend to recast in their own image the figures of gods, angels, prophets, or sages. To some extent, Jesus, Muhammad, and Confucius are all commentators, and in the rabbinic tradition, God himself is presented as an exegete who both studies and interprets his own Torah, and even learns from the rabbinic commentators, which he admits when he says "my children have bested me" (p. 87).

Several questions arise almost irresistibly: Why do we find in different traditions the canonization or, in Henderson's phrase, "apotheosis" of commentators and their works? How do commentaries change in history? What makes new interpretations possible against canonized old ones? In looking for answers to these questions, I eventually found Henderson's book rather unsatisfactory. Although he acknow-ledges that canonization "frequently proceeds by political, ecclesiastical, or literary fiat" (p. 38), his argument seeks precisely to depoliticize the process of canonization and the interrelationship between commentary and ideology. Having discussed how Confucian commentators harmonize their classics by relating them to some moral or cosmological order, Henderson concludes that "the canon was based in the nature of things" and not "just a congeries of ill-sorted and fragmented ancient writings that derived its authority more from political fiat than from its cosmic comprehensiveness" (pp. 48-9). This cavalier acceptance of the commentators' strategy of legitimation at its face value sounds incredibly naive, as the author refuses to investigate the legitimizing "system of correspondence" against the historical backdrop of the establishment of Confucian moral and political philosophy as the intellectual orthodoxy. The deliberate shying away from the political or institutional aspect of the exegetical tradition not only confines the discussion of canon and commentary to a purely textual dimension, but precludes a whole set of important issues concerning the nature and history of canon and commentary. The fact is that not all commentaries become canonical or quasi-canonical, that various political and ideological forces are involved in the debate and conflict of interpretation, and that some commentaries and interpretations are censored or denounced as heretical, and some authors and commentators are banned or purged in history because of their challenge to the orthodox view of the scripture or canon. Even Chu Hsi, a leading 12th-century Neo-Confucian philosopher frequently mentioned in this book, was chided by some conservatives of his time when he deviated from the Han commentaries in his reinterpretation of Confucian classics. Historically, both the formation and interpretation of canon have been controlled by the predominant ideology of a

given society. To challenge a certain commentary on the Bible or a Chinese classic is tantamount to challenging the power of the Church or the intellectual establishment, and therefore the change in interpretation is not just the result of modifications in reading methods or commentarial strategies. On the contrary, new enabling reading paradigms and commentarial strategies become available only when the orthodox ideological presumptions have lost their power of control in the larger context of social and cultural changes in history. By suppressing all these questions Henderson presents a picture of canon and commentary that seems universally unproblematic but is in fact distortingly monochromatic, and the pattern of comparison with which he repeatedly shows how commentarial assumptions and strategies correspond in all the traditions under discussion becomes so predictable that the reader may soon lose interest. Commentaries, according to Henderson, are "buffers in defense of sanity and civilization. Had such buffers been better maintained in modern times, perhaps some of the barbarities of our present century, when the life (or death) force has on several occasions run amok, might have been deflected" (p. 222). On such a nostalgic and sublimely moralistic note Henderson's book draws to its close, but one may wonder how much sense it makes with regard to cultural transformation and historical reality. Henderson's book is an important pioneer work in East-West comparative study of hermeneutics, but much more needs to be built on the work he has done, because in the history of interpretations and reinterpretations, the demise of old commentaries and the birth of new ones, and the interrelationship between commentary and ideology many areas remain to be explored for fruitful comparison of Confucian and Western exegesis.

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THE POET'S VOICE: ESSAYS ON POETICS AND GREEK LITERATURE. By Simon Goldhill. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. 369 p.

As a discussion of the figure of the poet and the place of poetry in language and culture, *The Poet's Voice* is an explicit attempt to bring postmodern literary theory into dialogue with classical studies. As he notes in his preface, Goldhill sets out to demonstrate the efficacy of contemporary literary theory for the study of ancient Greek literature; in addition, *The Poet's Voice* is aimed at the literary theorist who seldom engages directly with ancient Greek literature on its own terms as a complex literary tradition (despite the often-noted return to a few specific Greek texts in current theorizing about language and representation). In a chronological arrangement, Goldhill explores the poet's voice in texts from six centuries of Greek literature. The result is a highly readable set of essays that addresses the texture of Greek poetry from a theoretical standpoint.

The first chapter explores how "the *Odyssey* highlights the role and functioning of language itself" (p. 1) through an examination of the patterns of naming, disguise, recognition, and identity. Odysseus's activities as a bard or singer (*aoidos*)—his narration in Alcinous's palace (Books 8-12) and his Cretan tales—construct social identities through language. The limits of these identities are ultimately clarified by the recognition scenes that punctuate the last twelve books of the *Odyssey*. Thus the hero of the epic is figured as a poet, whose various and